Staging Sanctity: Moral Confusion in Pierre Troterel's *Tragédie de sainte Agnès*

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AT THE TURN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, a wave of hagiographical tragedies emerged in France that began to move away from the medieval mystery and introduce a new type and conception of religious theater, constituting a pivotal moment in French theater and cultural history. While the Catholic Church continued endorsing the hagiographical *mystère* as a local, collective endeavor—a "forme rituelle de propitiation" akin to an offering to God in order that the plague and other hardships be stopped, for example—the martyr *tragédies*, coming out of the medieval tradition but still intricately tied to it, were performed in schools or on the urban stage and were performed by a growing class of professional actors.[1] Nicolas Soret wrote his *Céciliade* (Paris, 1606) for the Notre Dame cathedral, not to appease the wrath of God, but to celebrate the patron saint of music. Étienne Poytevin's *Saincte Catherine* (Paris, 1619) and Pierre Troterel's *La Tragédie de sainte Agnès* (Rouen, 1615) do not seek to conciliate God either, but to entertain (and instruct, perhaps) a lay audience in an urban playhouse.[2] These earlier tragedies deserve our attention because they inform us of both medieval and early modern conceptions of and confusion between martyrdom, sanctity, and sexuality.[3] Consequently, they put into question the official *doxae* that the Catholic Reformation promoted in various texts at the turn of the century during the slow implementation of the Catholic Reformation in France. To illustrate this argument, I have chosen to concentrate on Troterel's *Sainte Agnès*, reading it against the theological and moral discourses on sanctity and martyr saints.[4]

The Catholic Church's reaction to the Reformation explains in part why canonized martyrs, and by extension Catholic martyr tragedy, gained popularity at the turn of the seventeenth century.[5] The Tridentine decrees promoted the reestablishment of the cult of the saints, for they advocated the legitimization of sacred images and relics in order to combat Protestantism that continued to haunt the Catholic Church.[6] Moreover, the revamping and revision of medieval Catholic hagiography by such writers as Laurent Surius, Pedro Ribadeneira, Cesare Baronio, and later the Jesuit Bollandists, make it clear that, although the saints, especially martyrs, played an integral role in

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Catholic theology and teachings since the early Middle Ages, the emphasis placed on canonized martyrs intensified during the Catholic Reformation. I will demonstrate that Troterel's Agnès conforms to many ideas that circulated regarding martyrs, notably their firmness in the face of death, and their eagerness to defy the tyrant, to profess their faith, and to die.

At the same time, however, Troterel's tragedy appeared in the midst of popular pastorals and tragicomedies that staged stories of unrequited love and amorous rivalry on the urban stage and not in the religious sphere of the colleges and the Church.[7] Troterel, a writer of comedies and farces for the secular stage, introduces similar themes in his martyr tragedy; consequently, the latter play often strays from the religious theme in order to exploit the effects of human passions of love, anger, hatred, revenge, violence, and sex. Indeed, the spectator has to be reminded on several occasions that Agnès is a saint, for, given the way the pagan men speak about her, it is easy to forget that the desired female is in fact the patron saint of virginity. Like medieval hagiography in which "sex perpetually threatens to disclose itself together with, or in the space of, sanctity," the tensions between sex and sanctity constitute a major problem within this tragedy.[8] Moreover, if it is true that, as Corneille writes in his "Examen" of *Théodore* in 1660, "la meilleure et plus saine partie" of his censors attributed the play's "mauvais succès" "à l'idée de la prostitution qu'on n'a pas pu souffrir" while never depicting the act of prostitution itself, Troterel's *Sainte Agnès*, written thirty years before Corneille's *Théodore*, offers an audacious and arguably licentious representation of Agnès' story, for the brothel, prostitutes, and symbolic and imminently physical rape scenes all appear on stage.[9] Indeed, Troterel's *Sainte Agnès* paradoxically praises the patron saint of virginity while undermining, even subverting, the religiosity of the subject matter by exposing the defiant martyr to numerous sexual threats and compromising situations.

A second aspect of the apparent disconnect between religious aspects of sanctity and the representation of a martyr saint on the urban stage that I will touch on here is the inefficacy of conversion in the martyr tragedy. Writing about mid-seventeenth-century Christian tragedies, Katherine Ibbett has suggested that the visibility of the martyr and her deeds are central to the narrative of the martyr legend, and that "in these narratives, the onlookers' lives are radically changed by what they have seen."[10] In this sense, the martyrs' courage and virtue evoke admiration in the spectator and act as contagion: for example, the miracles and the martyrs' unbelievable constancy during their deaths convert the pagan onlookers. It would appear that the spectacularity of sanctity attempts to edify the spectator while reminding her of the past suf-

ferings Christians endured for their religion. I will show, however, that this is not always the case in tragedies performed at the turn of the century, as exemplified by Troterel's tragedy. Agnès converts nobody, and it seems that Troterel's tragedy revolves more around the centrality of the martyr figure herself as both a human being and an inimitable exemplar who struggles to live under tyrannical rule, thus gesturing toward the subversiveness of the theater and competing civil and spiritual world orders.

During the slow implementation of the Catholic Reformation in France, the introduction and establishment of different Catholic religious orders flourished. After the dissolution of the extreme Catholic League factions, Henri IV reestablished the Jesuits in 1603, granting them repossession of their schools and the site that would become the Collège de la Flèche. The mystics from Spain and the Rhineland "invaded" France and French religious thought: for example, French writers translated Saint Teresa of Avila, Madame Acarie and Bérulle introduced the Carmelite order in France, and Saint François de Sales' mystical treatises were bestsellers.[11] Saint Vincent de Paul also greatly influenced religious life and practices in France.[12] Meanwhile, Gallican ideas were gaining influence, notably those that resisted Rome and the Pope's authority over the country's internal affairs.[13] There was thus not one single type of Catholicism, but rather a plurality of heterogeneous belief systems constituted the Catholic religion.

The heterogeneity of orders mirrors that of theater. The martyr tragedies of the period in particular do not adhere to one single belief system, but have different aims, concerns, and preoccupations, depending on the addressees, the context in which the playwrights wrote them, and the place in which the plays were performed (urban, scholastic or religious stages). Hence, when we think of martyr tragedy, we must not assume that it is a homogeneous, monolithic theatrical sub-genre. At the same time, theater was also a principal form of secular entertainment, and the pious messages transmitted from tragedies played on a stage can differ greatly from the sermons from the pulpit. At times, the martyr tragedies seem to foreground matters of which the Church would not approve, such as licentious aspects of sexuality, rape, and rebellion. This aspect of the martyr tragedy will come to the fore in a moment when considering Troterel's *Sainte Agnès*.[14] This tragedy privileges does not privilege the saint's faith as the center of the play; rather it is the love intrigue that leads the martyr to her death. As I will show, the figure of the martyr becomes problematically, even perversely, manifest, as she seems to ride a fine line between exhibitionism and solemnity.

As this is a martyr tragedy, Agnès does die, of course, but not on stage; rather, a Messenger appears in the last act to recount her death to her parents.

Although Troterel does not show Agnes' torture and corpse on stage, he does exploit other visual and violent aspects such as her naked body, veiled by her long hair, and the (temporary) death of the Roman governor's son Martian. Troterel's play is about a canonized martyr saint, a fact that could very well render the stripping of Agnès quite scandalous in the eyes of Church authorities in post-Tridentine France, where the depiction of nude saints was, officially at least, forbidden in painting.[15] Moreover, drawing from such medieval scholars as Jody Enders, Katherine Ibbett reminds us that the martyr's body has historically been a "site of contestation, and its polyvalence renders it dangerous."[16] Agnès' body is no exception, despite, or rather especially thanks to, the fact that her legend conventionally includes nudity and being taken to a brothel.

Troterel takes the "legitimate" liberty to include these episodes in his play, but this choice can in no way be deemed innocent.[17] On the one hand, the naked saint and imminent rape plot underscore the power of the martyr and the virtue of virginity, for if the Romans 'win' in the temporal world by ridding themselves of the civil threat that is Agnès), the virgin martyr is victorious in the spiritual one. Because her angel protects her, she is never raped, and with the grace of God she expresses virile courage in the face of powerful tyranny. She does not renounce her faith, and at the end of her life (and *de facto* the tragedy) she joins the realm of angels. Troterel is sure to exploit these didactic functions, giving Agnès a strong female voice that adheres to the religious interpretation of the martyr's legend.[18]

On the other hand, the tragedy touches on the problem of the saint and sexuality. While Troterel was not the first playwright to stage nudity in the seventeenth century,[19] and it would be a rash generalization to posit that he was aiming to please a predominantly male audience,[20] the tragedy is, like medieval hagiographical narratives, "intertwined with the didactic aims accomplished by plotting rape," while revealing another less pious although equally time-honored function, doubtless aimed at male listeners: the representation of seduction or assault opens a licit space that permits the audience to enjoy sexual language and contemplate the naked female body.[21] If indeed Troterel intended for his play to be performed on a professional stage, Gravdal's comments are especially pertinent. Agnès is a young girl of twelve or thirteen who is stripped and exposed in the streets for all to watch, and her body becomes the object of lust for the male spectators in the street, and perhaps even for the male spectators in the audience. She is also violated, symbolically at least, if we are to follow Tertullian's notion that "[e]very public exposure of an honorable virgin is (to her) a suffering of rape."[22] Further, in most versions of the legend, the angel gives Agnès a white garment to put on,

as depicted for example in José de Ribera's famous 1641 painting *Saint Agnes*; it is significant that Troterel does not include this detail, meaning that the actress would have been more or less naked, covered only by her hair, for the rest of the play, in front of the internal characters and the external spectators in the theater house.

Reading about a nearly naked woman is one thing; watching one is another. Indeed, the exposure of Agnès' nude body raises questions about sanctity and its representations within the public sphere. On Agnès's way to the brothel, a couple of lechers ("paillards") think she is an animal because of the hair covering her body:

> **Le 1er paillard.**
> Quelle farce voici? ce n'est rien qu'une bête,
> Que ce drôle-là mène, en triomphe et grand'fête,
> Qu'est-ce qu'il en veut faire? allons-lui demander.
> **Le 2ème paillard.**
> Corbieu je ne vais pas ainsi me hasarder,
> O dieux qu'elle est hideuse! une longue crinière,
> Lui va couvrant le corps et devant et derrière.

The "trompette," the man leading Agnès to the whorehouse and announcing her availability to the Romans, explains that she is actually a beautiful virgin, which inflames the lechers' lust:

> **Le 1er paillard.**
> Ô dieux que vois-je là? quelle rare merveille.
> **Le 2ème paillard.**
> Mes sens sons tous ravis, je suis tout transporté,
> Oncques [Jamais] je n'avais vu de si grande beauté.
> **Le 1er paillard.**
> Dieux je suis en extase! ô dieux que je suis aise,
> De voir si beau visage, il faut que je le baise.
> **Sainte Agnès.**
> Retire-toi vilain, ne me viens point toucher,
> De tes profanes mains.
> **Le 1er paillard.**
> Vous avez beau cacher
> Votre bouche et vos yeux, si, si vous baiserai-je.
> **Sainte Agnès.**
> Laisse-moi, laisse-moi profane sacrilège,
> Je suis vouée à Dieu.
> **Le 2ème paillard.**
> C'est donc au dieu d'amour (IV, 64-65).

The bawdy man loses self-control and kisses Agnès; she tries to resist his advances and proclaims her loyalty to God, but the pagan does not understand and assumes that she is devoted to the god of love. Ironically, the pagan men become the beasts, because they represent irascible pagans who have lost reason and let lust and sexual desire take over their senses.[23] This reversal is expressed within the play a bit later when Agnès' angel says of the pagans that "Ils ne méritent pas d'être dits raisonnables" and places them even below animals, since even the "brutes des bois" recognize that there is only one true God (IV, 72).

Explicit references to sexuality continue once Agnès enters the brothel. The prostitute ("maquarelle") leads the saint into a chamber where "L'on vous y montrera, comme vous fûtes faite" (IV, 67). This scene could provoke two types of reactions in the audience that are not necessarily incompatible but infringe on the seriousness and religiosity of the matter. In his study of horror, John D. Lyons suggests that "[h]orror, as disgust and aversion, appears as the reverse and complement of corporal desire. Horror is reverse eros. Like the erotic, the horrible is fixated on the body."[24] Similarly, Agnès' body is an erotically and horrifically charged sign that underscores her vulnerability and her courage in the face of sexual tyranny. Hence, on the one hand, the spectators could laugh at, and get excited erotically by, the lechers, their jokes, and the prostitute's insinuation; on the other, the audience could be disgusted by the pagans and admire the virgin.

What is more, not only is the virgin running about the stage covered in her hair, but there are also several serious discussions about the legitimacy of rape between Martian, the governor Simphronie's son who has fallen for Agnès, and Censorin, his confidant, in the third and fourth acts. Censorin argues that it is better to rape Agnès to "éteindre ainsi vos feux, / Que d'en être toujours consommé langoureux." Martian rejects Censorin's advice in this scene ("Je serais trop cruel, je serais trop barbare, / De forcer de la sorte une beauté si rare" [III, 55]), but in the fourth act, because Agnès has been taken to a brothel and is thus available to anyone, he concedes, "Or c'est un point vidé, je vais donc en jouir" (IV, 73). He even invites Censorin to join him and take part in a collective rape: "Venez vous réjouir / Tantôt avecque moi, car il est raisonnable, / Que vous participiez à ce bien délectable" (IV, 73).

Ideally, the depiction of the pagans' vices would encourage the audience to be virtuous. This is Troterel's intention in his comedy *Les Corrivaux*, as he writes in the "Avertissement au Lecteur":

> Lecteur, sçaches que je n'ay pas compose ceste folastre comedie pour t'apprendre à suivre le vice, car il n'y a rien au monde que j'abhorre tant. Et te jure de bonne ame que je hay plus que la peste ceux qui le suivent. Le subject dont pour lequel je l'ay composée est à fin qu'en y voyant sa noirceur si bien depeinte, tu t'animes à suivre la vertu.[25]

The poet could not express any other sentiment, and his expressed intentions should be read with a fairly large dose of skepticism. It is clearly the poet's expressed goal—"suivre la vertu"—that would guarantee the scene's morality, yet it is likely that a disconnect exists between what the playwright intended to do and the audience's reaction to such scabrous scenes.

To underscore the tragedy's moral mission and to prevent things from getting out of hand, Troterel depicts Martian's punishment for his vicious rape attempt. Once Martian enters Agnès' room and attempts to rape her, the angel strikes him down:[26]

> Le premier qui viendra pour la prendre et forcer,
> Se peut bien assurer, de se voir transpercer
> De ce glaive pointu, car le Dieu de justice,
> Veut qu'il soit châtié de ce rude supplice,
> Puis après envoyé dans le creux des enfers,
> Pour y être chargé de mille et mille fers (IV, 69).

Agnès' guardian angel justifies this divine violence to show that it is through God's will that Martian is punished and that Agnès keeps her virginity.[27] Almost comically, Martian, who penetrates the whorehouse and then attempts to pierce Agnès sexually, ends up getting pierced himself by the angel's sacred "glaive pointu."

Martian's death is a victory for Christians, yet it is a loss for the pagans. Indeed, Censorin and the lechers are terrified by Martian's death to the point that Censorin exclaims "je meure d'impatience, / De dépit, de chagrin, de regret, de souci," and the "1er Paillard" has "le cœur tout transi, / De voir un tel malheur, une telle tristesse" (IV, 76-77). Simphronie, too, is in despair upon seeing his son's corpse: "Ne vois-je pas mon fils étendu mort et pâle? / Ô bons dieux quelle vue! ô quel élancement! / Ô grands dieux que je sens de peine et de tourment!" (V, 81).

As God has the power to kill, however, he also has the power to resuscitate. When Martian does come back to life, thanks to Agnès' prayer, he has converted to Christianity (V, 82). Simphronie is a bit confused by all of this; he nonetheless rejoices in his son's revival and seems to intend to spare Agnès, and the play seems to veer toward a happy ending. However, immediately after Martian's recovery, the high priests ("sacrificateurs") and a crowd of townspeople ("le peuple") rush onto the stage, fighting each other (V, 84). The former accuse the latter of being Christians, to which the latter object, explaining why they have come to see Agnès:

> Nous ne sommes chrétiens, ni ne l'avons été.
> Ce qui nous mène ici, c'est qu'un bruit partout vole,
> Que la gentille Agnès, du vent de sa parole,
> A tué votre fils, puis l'a ressuscité (V, 86).

They are only interested in Agnès because she has killed and then resuscitated the governor's son with her "arts de Médée" (V, 81). They are more fascinated by the magical aspects of this act than the religious ones, and, once Simphronie ambivalently decides to hand Agnès over to the court to be judged, the crowd simply leaves: "Puis doncques qu'Atropos de si près la menace, / Pour ne la voir finir partons de cette place" (V, 88). The crowd obeys the high priests and Simphronie, and they do not convert to Christianity. Agnès herself converts nobody. Her powers seem to be limited, and only God has the power to convert the pagans, as in the case of Martian. In most versions of the legend, Simphronie is converted upon the resuscitation of his son, yet, although he is distraught by the idea of Agnès' death, he shows no signs of conversion during this scene. Further, according to the messenger's report of Agnès' death at the end of the tragedy, the onlookers of Agnès' torture and miracle are never said to have converted (V, 93-95).[28]

The sparse conversions counter the theological discourse surrounding the power of the martyrs' spectacular resistance to torture and death.[29] The lack of conversions at the sight of Agnès' sexual torture, (threatened and symbolic) rape, and final demise puts the efficiency of the spectacle of martyrdom into question. Conversion does not seem to be a concern for Troterel; rather, it is the figure of the martyr that is an exemplar to be admired and the figure of the persecutor that is an exemplar of vice, analogous to Saint François de Sales' advice in his best-selling mystical work, *Introduction à la vie devote* (1609). Indeed, the persecuted martyrs offer past examples to admire, and de Sales proposes that his readers, while reflecting on the martyrs' suffering, consider "les peines que les martyrs souffrirent jadis et celles que tant de personnes endurent, plus grièves, sans aucune proportion, que celles esquelles vous êtes."[30] In turn, de Sales evokes an ethic of suffering: in remembrance and contemplation of the suffering that martyrs endured during hardship and misfortune, the Christian should realize that her own situation is not so bad. This dialectic of suffering reduces and relieves the pain that the Christian endures.

The staging of violence and martyrs' resistance to their pain underscores this ethic of suffering and revulsion toward anger and cruelty, which, in the end, are two sides of the same coin. The scholastic preacher Nicolas Coëffeteau's *Tableau des passions* (1620) corroborates this claim: after giving a list of possible remedies for anger, Coëffeteau concludes:

Le souverain remede [de la colère] est de jetter les yeux sur les exemples de patience et les serviteurs de Dieu, et les saincts nous ont monster parmy les traverses de ce monde, et sur tout les arrester sur ceux que nous a laissez le fils de Dieu, qui estant outrage des hommes ne les a pas maudit, qui estant persecuté, n'a point menacé ses bourreaux, qui estant crucifié, a prié pour ses ennemys; et qui en fin par une philosophie bien éloignée de celle de ce monde, a mis nostre salut en sa Croix, nos triomphes en ses oppobres, et nostre gloire en ses supplices.[31]

The depiction of bloodthirsty tyrants invites the spectator to reconsider their actions when they make others suffer. In *Sainte Agnès*, by depicting the eponymous heroine's firmness and resolution, Troterel reinforces the theological interpretations of ancient martyrs, which gives the onlookers strength and consolation in their own lives. In theoretical and theological terms, the tragedy and Coëffeteau's statements conform to writings by Jesuit promoters of the Catholic Reformation such as Ribandeneira and Richeome. In theater practice, however, one must wonder to what extent this type of identification and purgation of anger operates. Would the spectator have truly left the theater house hating vice and embracing virtue, or would they have left thinking about the more lewd aspects of the spectacle? It would be most judicious to claim that both reactions would have been possible. Still, this dual potentiality is in itself subversive in the treatment of tendentious subjects such as the Christian martyrs, and Troterel's tragedy engages a provocative dialectic between secularity and sanctity.

This dialectic is further manifested in the competition between two ethical systems, one political or temporal, the other religious or eternal. Martian's goal is to possess Agnès sexually, while the martyr's ambition is to join Christ in the afterlife. They both have waited too long for what they want, but the stakes and end results of their struggles are very different. More generally speaking, these tensions raise questions of how to live a civil life and how to be a Christian. Simphronie must persecute Agnès because she disrupts civil laws, or the status quo that attempts to maintain peace among the people: the *Pax Romana*. The Roman Empire demanded that only one religion exist in order to maintain order; Agnès is thus considered rebellious in the Roman system because she overtly challenges the pagan religion. Simphronie tries to convert her to paganism. He gives her several chances to renounce her Christian faith; Agnès, however, rejects the tyrant's offers and blasphemes the pagan gods. Agnès does so in order to escape the violent world in which she lives and to join God in the peaceful afterlife. In short, she refuses to follow the *Pax Romana* in favor of the *Pax Christi*.

Consequently, as in many of the martyr tragedies at the turn of the century, the physical and sexual violence invites the spectators to rethink their own

ethical systems in the reality outside of the theater house or church. The ways martyrs act, however, are perhaps not always the ways the spectators should act in real life. The spectators are to admire the martyrs, but not necessarily to imitate them. Martyred saints certainly exemplify the power of God's grace and the ability of the human will to resist evil with the help of the Christian faith, but they are extreme examples under tyrannical rule. In this way, martyr tragedies are similar to medieval hagiographical narratives that make "la sainteté une représentation superlative de la vertu, dès lors inimitable."[32] However, at a time when religious persecution is ubiquitous, the stakes are much different and arguably higher. The martyr tragedies often end up in a "dialogue de sourds" between the Christian and the pagan tyrant, both believing that their religion is the right one. This type of situation mirrors, to a certain extent, the religious violence that tore France apart for nearly a century between Catholics and Protestants, between the League and Henry III, even amongst Catholics, in which each one persecuted the other for not following the one 'true' religion.

If it is true, then, that early modern women and men thought tragedy to be a morally didactic genre—and the evidence suggests that this is the case—what exactly is *Sainte Agnès* teaching them? From the spectacle of a naked actress in a whorehouse threatened with collective rape and her relative impotence to convert onlookers, to the official discourse on sanctity and martyrdom within the Catholic Church, it is difficult to discern which message to take home. What is more, Troterel's treatment of the martyr narrative explodes in many directions, mixing pastoral, farcical, comical, and tragic elements from one scene to the next, which, in the end, undermine the moral message. The ambiguous and perverse depictions of the martyr figure, coupled with the confusion of genres, lead to a dizzying morality, but they are also indicative of the freedom playwrights had during this transitional period to experiment with drama, before the revival of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the crown's investment in and control of the theater, and the establishment and enforcement of a series of rules and precepts that constitute what we call today neoclassical French tragedy.

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Notes

1. Leonard R. Mills, "Introduction," *Le Mystère de saint Sébastien* (Geneva: Droz, 1965), 19.
2. These are only three of the martyr tragedies that appeared at the turn of the century. For a complete bibliography of martyr plays performed and/or printed during this time period, see

Paul Scott, "Resistance Theories, Orthodoxy and Subversive Drama in Early Modern France," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 21 (1999): 67-70; Lancaster E. Dabney, *French Dramatic Literature in the Reign of Henri IV* (Austin: University Cooperative Society, 1952); Raymond Lebègue, "Tableau de la tragédie française de 1573 à 1610," in Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance (1944): 374-93.

3. These martyr tragedies remain relatively under-studied in criticism, compared with medieval hagiography and the later "tragédies chrétiennes" of the 1640s. See Kosta Loukovitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse classique en France* (1933) (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977); J. S. Street, *French Sacred Drama from Bèze to Corneille* (New York: Cambridge U P, 1983); Jean Dubu, *Les Églises chrétiennes et le théâtre (1550-1850)*, (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1997).
4. It is surprising that Troterel's play has remained largely ignored in more recent criticism, especially since several critics have held Troterel's tragedy in relatively high esteem. Henry C. Lancaster writes that Troterel is "the most important writer treated" in his chapter on martyr tragedies between 1610 and 1630, and that "it is with *Sainte Agnès* that the story of a martyrdom definitely becomes a possible subject for a modern French tragedy" (*French Dramatic Literature* 1:1 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1929), 103, 106). Gustave Lanson, too, suggests that *Sainte Agnès* "par la convenance et la fermeté de certains morceaux, annonce *Polyeucte*" (*Esquisse d'une histoire de la tragédie française* [Paris: Champion, 1927], 34). Finally, Loukovitch, who is often harshly judgmental of pre-Cornelian tragedy, writes that "Troterel a peint des caractères vivants," and "[p]ar sa psychologie encore rudimentaire, *Sainte Agnès* fait entrevoir un peu la tragédie chrétienne classique" (121). Although this study does not align itself with a teleological interpretation of French tragedy offered by Lanson and Loukovitch, their comments give valuable insight into the existing tensions within these plays on which it is worthwhile to elaborate. Jules Deschamps established a modern edition of *Sainte Agnès*, without notes, in 1875 (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles). The citations here come from the 1615 edition, consulted at the BNF, and also available on Gallica (Rouen: Raphaël du Petit Val, 1615). As the tragedy is not divided into scenes, the Roman numeral refers to the act, the Arabic numeral to the page number.
5. Christian Biet, "La Sainte, la prostituée, l'actrice: l'impossible modèle religieux dans *Théodore vierge et martyre* de Corneille," *Littératures classiques* 39 (Spring 2000): 81.
6. Joseph Lecler, Henri Holstein, Pierre Adnès and Charles Lefebvre, *Le Concile de Trente (1551-1563)*, part 2 (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 11:194-96.
7. Pierre Troterel, sieur d'Aves (c. 1580-1620), a Normand playwright, wrote the first known French *tragédie* about saint Agnes. Although he does not seem to have known the *Jeu de sainte Agnès*, the anonymous *Vie* or the English version, we can safely say that he, along with his contemporaries, was well aware of the saint's legend. Like Saint Cecilia, the rediscovery of Saint Agnes's remains in 1605 surely reinforced the Catholics' interest in the saint. Troterel's tragedy seems to have been intended for the professional, urban stage during the regency of Marie de Médicis.
8. Cary Howie, *Claustrophilia: The Erotics of Enclosure in Medieval Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 38.
9. Pierre Corneille, *Théâtre complet*, vol. 2, Georges Couton, ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1971), 271. For more on the causes of *Théodore*'s failure, see Marc Fumaroli, "Classicisme français et culture italienne: réflexions sur l`échec de *Théodore*," in *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981); Susan Reed Baker. "*Théodore, Vierge et martyre* [1645]: A Case of Prostitution." *Degré Second* 10 (1986): 1-15; Christian Biet. "La Sainte, la prostituée, l'actrice."
10. Katherine Ibbett, "From Martyr to Mourner: The Politics of the Un-extraordinary," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 24 (2002): 166.
11. Henri Brémond, *Histoire de la pensée religieuse en France: depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 1, François Trémolières, ed. (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2006).
12. We must not forget Louis Richeome, the French Jesuit liaison between Rome and France, who wrote several apologetic and polemical works promoting the Jesuit cause and the Counter Reformation (*Tres-humble remonstrance et requete de la Compagnie de Jesus*, 1598, *Tableaux sacrés*, 1601, and *La Peinture spirituelle*, 1611).

13. Although "Gallicanisme," led by Bossuet's *Déclaration du clergé* (1682), was not firmly established until the end of the seventeenth century, Gallican ideas stem from as early as the twelfth century. In 1438, Charles VII, by the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, limited papal prerogatives and affirmed the superiority of the decisions of the Councils of Bale and Constance over those of the pope.
14. Troterel's treatment of sexuality in the martyr story is not an isolated incident. Poytevin's *Sainte Catherine*, for example, also uses a gallant plot to recount the death of the eponymous saint. Her faith does certainly cause her demise to some extent, but it is more her refusal to marry the emperor that leads her to her martyrdom.
15. Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du XVI^e^ siècle, du XVII^e^ siècle et du XVIII^e^ siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 2.
16. Katherine Ibbett, *The Style of the State in French Theater, 1630-1660. Neoclassicism and Government* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 33.
17. Troterel's play is not the first instance in French theater history where Agnes is naked on stage. In the fourteenth-century Provençal mystery play, "au moment même où Agnès est dépouillée de ses vêtements, sa chevelure croît miraculeusement et la revêt. La science du machiniste, à l'époque où se place notre mystère, n'était probablement pas assez développée pour que l'on pût exécuter ce changement de vue, si bien qu'Agnès reste assez longtemps nue sur la scène, et chante même la douleur qu'elle en éprouve" (Léon Clédat, "Le Mystère provençal de sainte Agnès: examen du manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Chigi et de l'édition de M. Bartsch," in *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* [Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1877], 272). Troterel was most likely unaware of this play.
18. Richeome praises Agnès as an exemplar of virtue: "Qui ne préférera les victoires d'Agnès romaine, représentée des premières en ce tableau, tenant un petit agnelet, à celles de Scipion, de Pompée, et de Pyrrhus? Laquelle âgée seulement de treize ans, vint à bout de toutes les machines, et assauts de trois ennemis, du monde, de la chair, et du diable, méprisant l'accointance d'un très-riche et très-beau gentilhomme romain, fils du gouverneur Simphron, qui la recherchait éperdument à femme?" ("Triomphe de la Virginité," in *La Peinture spirituelle* [Lyon: Pierre Rigaud, 1611], 2:762).
19. In Nicolas Chrestien's *Les Portugais infortnez* (Rouen, 1606), all the Portuguese are stripped on stage.
20. Although it is undeniable that men would have been in the audience, there is no actual proof that women were absent in the theater (John Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences* [London: Oxford U P, 1957]). In fact, in the "Prologue" to Troterel's *Corrivaux, comédie facétieuse*, the "Prologueur" begins, "Messieurs, Dieu vous doint joye; à vous aussi mes dames, / Et vous pareillement, belles filles et femmes!" Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, ed., *Ancien théâtre français* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprints, 1972), 7:232. There is no proof that the women in the audience were "surtout des femmes perdues" (Eugène Rigal, *Théâtre français*, 1901 [Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969], 213), and we must also remember that Troterel dedicated *Sainte Agnès* to a woman, the "Noble et vertueuse dame française d'Averton."
21. Kathryn Gravdal, Ravishing *Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991), 24.
22. Tertullian, "On the Veiling of Virgins," *Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian*, Robert D. Sider, trans. (Washington D.C.: Catholic U of America P, 2001), 4:3.
23. Joyce Salisbury sums up nicely the medieval discussions of humans and animals in terms of sex: "The earliest and most persistent Christian distinction between humans and animals was that humans had reason and animals did not. This definition seemed to influence Christian thinkers' perception of sexuality and extended into their analysis of human versus animal intercourse. Augustine as early as the late fourth century established the notion that during sexual intercourse 'there is an almost total extinction of mental alertness; the intellectual sentries […] are overwhelmed.' If sexual intercourse banished reason, and if reason were the defining quality of humans, then sexual intercourse was bestial and threatened one's humanity. Even Clement, the apologist for moderate Christian sexuality, said that Adam and Eve had rushed into intercourse 'like irrational animals.' The irrational passion implicit in the act of intercourse led Thomas Aquinas to say that 'in sexual intercourse man

becomes like a brute animal' and that insofar as people cannot 'moderate concupiscence' with reason, they are like beasts" (*The Beast Within. Animals in the Middle Ages* [New York: Routledge, 1994], 78).

24. John D. Lyons, "The Decorum of Horror: A Reading of La Mesnardière's *Poëtique*," in *Homage to Paul Bénichou*, Sylvie Romanowski and Monique Bilezikian, ed. (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, Inc., 1994), 36.
25. *Ancien théâtre français*, 7:231.
26. There is no stage direction indicating this violence on stage. However, as we have already seen Agnès enter the brothel and her chamber where she converses with the angel, we can imagine Martian entering the room and being struck down while Censorin speaks with the lechers.
27. Corneille's Théodore makes a direct reference to Agnès when speaking of being saved from the brothel: "De cette même honte il sauve Agnès dans Rome, / Il daigne s'y servir d'un ange au lieu d'un homme" (V, 5, 1639-40). In his "Notice" to the tragedy, Georges Couton does not exclude the possibility of Corneille's awareness of Troterel's play (1322-23).
28. According to the legend, Agnès is to be burned at the stake, but the fire does not ignite; those who attempt to relight it are struck down by bolts of lightning. To kill her, the executioners eventually slit her throat.
29. The Jesuit Ribadeneira, for example, maintains in the Preface to his *Fleurs des vies de saints* (*Flos sanctorum*, 1599) that the martyrs' stories must be told to Christians to confirm their faith: "Un des plus grands Arguments que les Chrétiens puissent avoir, pour confirmer leur sainte Foy, est celui des Bien-heureux Martyrs, qui donnèrent leurs vies pour la Religion. Car il y a un nombre infini d'hommes et de femmes de tous ans, conditions, âges et nations, qui sont morts avec une si étrange et admirable constance, qu'ils étonnèrent et vainquirent le monde, ayant auparavant été tourmentez de divers cruels supplices, que le diable et les Tyrans purent inventer." *Les Fleurs des vies des saints et fêtes de toute l'année*, 2 vols. (Rouen: J. de la Mare, 1645-46).
30. François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1609), André Ravier and Roger Devos, eds. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 3:3.
31. Nicolas Coëffeteau, *Tableau des passions humaines* (Paris: S. Cramoisy, 1620), 601.
32. Brigitte Cazelles, *Le Corps de sainteté* (Geneva: Droz, 1982), 47.